

## **Bremby Challenges KDHE at October Town Hall Meeting**

*By P.E. Breedlove, Jr.*

The challenge came early in the Secretary's Town Hall meeting. He and his partner would be back next summer to defend their unofficial washer-toss title, taking on all KDHE comers and sending them back to their desks defeated.

But Secretary Roderick Bremby also issued another challenge to KDHE colleagues, in person and to those watching via district office teleconference, attending his first Town Hall meeting Oct. 27, 28, 29 in Memorial Hall.

KDHE employees need to be healthier, said the Secretary, noting that Gov. Kathleen Sebelius was preparing to announce a major statewide health initiative.

"We are the state health agency and we need to be out front and lead," Bremby said. "I'm going to be out front while we lead the state to better health, and I want you with me."

Since starting a strict "energy balance program" in August, under professional and medical supervision, Bremby says he's lost 40 pounds through the end of October. He encouraged employees to adopt a healthier life style by curbing tobacco use, increasing physical activity and following proper nutrition. Failure to control these three things account for over 30 percent of the deaths in this nation, and continue to drive increase in our health care costs.

In a forum designed to inform, exchange ideas and unite the agency, Bremby's Town Hall meeting touched on the past, present and offered a peek at the future KDHE.

Bremby shared some of the history of public health in Kansas and the founding of KDHE 30 years ago. One of Kansas' early leaders of public health, Dr. Samuel J. Crumbine, brought about many changes, including the elimination of the public drinking cup and inspired modern Food and Drug laws. The history told an important story of how Kansas has been a national and international leader in improving public health.

Discussing the present KDHE, Bremby pointed out many highlights from each of the agency's four operating divisions: health, environment, health statistics and the laboratory. He also highlighted activities from fiscal, legal, human resources, public information and information services. For every success story shared at the meeting, more were left on the cutting room floor due to time constraints.

"I wish I could share with you every recent success story we have had, but we'd never get out of here if I did," he said. "We have many great stories to tell."

*Continued -*

As the agency prepares for the future, a methodology of 'right sizing' will come into play, according to Bremby. This balancing act between incoming state funds, fee funds and grant funds need to be accurately matched with a highly skilled and flexible workforce to accomplish the agency's mission.

He shared that division and bureau directors were now engaged in the 'right sizing' process to evaluate personnel needs and budget savings. One of our goals is to reduce agency expenditures \$6 million by fiscal year 2006.

"We think there is \$6 million out there to be trimmed, and we're going to ask you how we can be more efficient," Bremby said.

Reaction to the Town Hall concept and message was generally well received.

Brad Roberts, environmental geologist with Bureau of Waste Management (BWM), said he believes Town Hall Meetings are important. "It's important for us to realize what's going on with the rest of the organizations. We need to know what other agencies are doing so we can do our jobs better."

Shawn Howell, environmental engineer with BWM, said, "a lot of the budget systems were interesting. I didn't realize such a high portion of our financing was based on grants."



**Secretary Bremby throws down the washer-toss challenge at his Town Hall meeting Oct. 27.**